

the legacy of this great man and the inspiration of his mission carries on.

Cesar Chavez was born in 1927 as the son of a poor farm worker and general store owner. The loss of his family's land during the Depression forced him to quit school and work in the fields, where he gained a first-hand understanding for the dingy, overcrowded quarters that these workers must endure—often without electricity, bathrooms, or running water. Although he never owned a house or earned more than \$6,000 a year, he moved to California in the early 1960s with his family and began his lifelong mission to advocate an end to such conditions.

Mr. Chavez once said, "We can choose to use our lives for others to bring about a better and more just world for our children . . . and in giving of yourself you will discover a whole new life full of meaning and love." This great man was a selflessly giving leader who should inspire and motivate us all. Through the United Farm Workers of America his life was used for the benefit of future generations, proving that there can be strength and power in unity, no matter how hopeless the situation.

Cesar Chavez must not be forgotten, and neither can his work. In focusing on our treatment of farm workers, and teaching us how to care for fellow Americans, he also showed that there is much work still to be done. We must remember that there are still too many below-poverty wages, unsafe working conditions, and individuals who suffer from substandard living standards without proper benefits. We must use this ten-year anniversary to respond to the continued injustice that exists for farm workers that Mr. Chavez would not tolerate. By continuing the work of this fine man, the mission he had for human rights will carry on and the spirit of his great life will most directly be remembered.

IN HONOR OF MELVINA CONLEY,
PRESERVER OF THE "FREEDOM
SUITS" ARCHIVE, ST. LOUIS CIR-
CUIT COURT 1978-2001

HON. WM. LACY CLAY

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 4, 2003

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Ms. Melvina Conley, a former employee of the St. Louis Circuit Court, Clerk's Office, who realized the value of old lawsuits filed by slaves seeking their freedom, and worked diligently for many years to protect and preserve the documents, now known as the "Freedom Suits."

A collection of lawsuits filed in St. Louis by slaves of African descent, who were seeking their freedom, have become the focus of a restoration project by the clerk of the St. Louis Circuit Court. Working with the Court in the state of Missouri and Washington University. This is a great find for St. Louis, a treasure within our own midst. I'm excited that we have a national gift, a part of our history, to share with the world.

So far, at least 281 lawsuits, along with the historic Dred Scott lawsuit (which figured prominently in the start of the Civil War), have been selected for preservation and placed on display on the web site maintained by Washington University at www.stlcourtrecords.wustl.edu.

Called the St. Louis Circuit Court Historical Records Project, the site includes details of the lawsuits—who filed, against whom, when and where—and a copy of the actual handwritten document. Lawsuits also included allegations of trespass, assault and battery, false imprisonment, as well as petition affirming status as a free man.

Found among approximately four million pages of aging court records dating back to 1782, the nearly 300 "freedom suits" (filed between 1806 and 1865) were found covered with coal dust, in the labyrinth of the St. Louis Circuit Court system.

As early as 1807, under Missouri territorial statutes, persons held in wrongful servitude could sue for freedom if they had evidence of wrongful enslavement. The territorial statute was codified in Missouri State law in 1824 and remained in effect until after the Civil War.

Most people using this law to obtain their freedom were enslaved Africans. Since their cases were all brought for the same reason, to obtain the basic right to freedom, collectively, historians refer to the cases as "freedom suits."

In an effort to protect the "freedom suits" and the hundreds of thousands of other old cases from decay, rats and other plagues, courthouse officials began removing them from vulnerable "off-site" storerooms to a more secure archive in the main Courthouse and the Old Globe-Democrat Building on Tucker Boulevard. In September 1999, St. Louis Circuit Court Clerk Mariano V. Favazza invited the Missouri State Archives, a division of Missouri's Office of Secretary of State, to initiate a project to preserve and make accessible the historical records. So extensive were the files, a cut-off date of before 1875 was used for the project. The court was founded in 1804.

The freedom suits brought by Dred Scott and his wife, Harriet, in 1846, became the first cases to go online in January 2001, attracting nearly a million information requests from visitors from around the world in their first year on the web. That fall, the American Culture Studies Program in Arts & Sciences agreed to expand this initiative by digitizing additional cases and creating a web-based search tool.

While I thank everyone involved with the project for finding the documents and preserving them, Mr. Speaker, I especially want to make a special tribute to Ms. Melvina Conley, as Preserver of the "Freedom Suits."

A 33-year employee of the St. Louis Circuit Clerk's Office—from 1969 to 2001—Ms. Conley spent many years working as a data entry clerk.

In 1978, she began working in a second-floor office in the old and dusty archive section of the courthouse, where she commenced a search for the legendary "Freedom Suits" or "Slave Cases."

Because of her interest in history, Mrs. Conley was willing to do a job that others did not want to do. Sifting through the old files was literally a dirty business that few wanted.

At the time, the famous Dred Scott case was protected in a vault in the courthouse and she knew Dred Scott was not the first case filed and that there were probably many others. In 1979 she commenced a search of the archive's 444 drawers for suits. The first suit she found was of a mother and her two sons, ages 5 and 2. The mother had filed suit—and lost—to keep her young sons from being

"hired out." "I thought I had died and gone to heaven," Ms. Conley says now, describing how she felt at the time of the find.

Preserving the "Freedom Suits" in boxes, Ms. Conley became an unofficial historian, archivist and preserver of history in her duties as a data entry clerk. In 1999 when Circuit Clerk Favazza joined forces with city, state and federal agencies to preserve the files, Ms. Conley became a key instrument in helping to make that transition, as well, having helped to carefully preserve the Dred Scott suit and hundreds of other "Freedom Suits" for posterity in her adopted home.

Born in Charleston, Mo., Ms. Conley attended Cote Brillante Grade School, and graduated from Sumner High School in 1957.

After high school she married John Conley who became a politician and served St. Louis and Missouri as a committeeman and a state representative. They have five children, four stepchildren, 16 grandchildren and one great grandchild. In 2001 Ms. Conley retired from her job as an Accountant 1, Supervisor, in the St. Louis Circuit Court.

Joining me in recognizing Melvina Conley's dedication to the nurturing of the "Freedom Suits" and the continued nurturing and care of the files by the St. Louis Circuit Court, is U.S. Representative MAXINE WATERS, of California and a St. Louis native.

Recently, the Honorable Ms. WATERS and I visited the archive located in the old Globe-Democrat Building, in the 700 block of N. Tucker Blvd., to meet with city, state and university officials. During our visit we were welcomed enthusiastically by Mr. Michael Everman, CA and Field Archivist, Local Records Program with the Missouri State Archives; and State Archivist Dr. Kenneth Winn. Ms. WATERS said she first learned about the project from a Los Angeles Times article and made arrangements to visit the archive. Both she and I were told by Favazza that "HBO and Hollywood producers" have made inquiries to his office about the lawsuits.

"The connection for me between St. Louis and Hollywood is just absolute," Ms. WATERS said. Honorable Speaker, I want to find the funds needed to ensure permanent protection for the documents and to keep them safe for future generations. This is just the beginning. I know I can count on my colleague, MAXINE WATERS, to help get national exposure. It is the history of our country, which originated in St. Louis. It makes you proud of their actions—if you can find a silver lining in slavery. You have to preserve your history or you will be doomed to repeat it.

HONORING TAIWAN AND
PRESIDENT CHEN SHUI-BIAN

HON. DENNIS A. CARDOZA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 4, 2003

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Republic of China President Chen Shui-bian on his third anniversary in office and for Taiwan's continued support and friendship with the United States.

Since his election three years ago, President Chen has continued to make strides toward full democracy by guaranteeing greater constitutional and human rights to the citizens

of Taiwan. Today, Taiwan is home to more than ninety political parties, and virtually every political office is actively contested through free and fair elections. In fact, President Chen is a former political dissident himself. Taiwan's constitution guarantees its citizens extensive political, personal and religious freedoms. Further, President Chen has committed Taiwan to many international human rights treaties.

Under President Chen's strong leadership, Taiwan has remained true to its democratic values and has continued to be a model for its neighbors in the region. But as the Taiwanese people celebrate the third anniversary of their President's election, they also are struggling to contain the recent outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS, in their country. The SARS outbreak is a good demonstration of what Secretary of State Colin Powell said recently—that the deadly virus recognizes no international borders. Taiwan is a part of the world that has been deeply affected by SARS and needs to play its proper role in preventing further spread of the virus. For these reasons, Taiwan urgently needs representation in the WHO.

I also strongly support Taiwan's democratization at home and its campaign to join international organizations abroad. Taiwan is a strong ally which stood shoulder to shoulder with the United States after the events of September 11, 2001. We in the United States Congress appreciate Taiwan's support for our nation—a solid partnership that has endured for many years.

Taiwan is making significant contributions to the international community and I know that our bilateral relations will only grow stronger in the coming years. Again, congratulations to President Chen and to the people of Taiwan.

CONGRATULATING SAI GUNTURI ON WINNING THE 76TH ANNUAL SCRIPPS HOWARD NATIONAL SPELLING BEE

HON. PETE SESSIONS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 4, 2003

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to honor the champion of the 76th annual Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee. 251 spellers advanced to the finals of the National Spelling Bee that were held here in Washington, D.C. during May 28–29.

The champion of the spelling bee is Sai Gunturi, an eighth grader at St. Mark's School of Texas, that is located in Dallas. Sai was challenged throughout the 15th round of competition, and ultimately won the tournament by correctly spelling the word pococurante {pO-kO-kyu-'ran-tE} (pococurante is defined as caring little or indifferent, nonchalant). Sai was sponsored by The Dallas Morning News and comes from a fine family tradition of spelling excellence, as his sister Nivedita, tied for eighth place in the 1997 National Spelling Bee.

Sai is not just a terrific speller, but also a tremendous asset to the greater St. Mark's school community. He is a community leader and an astounding scholar. My sincere congratulations go out to Sai, his family, and to his teachers and friends at St. Mark's.

HONORING SAINT RICHARD PARISH

HON. WILLIAM O. LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 4, 2003

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to St. Richard Parish. On June 8, 2003, St. Richard will celebrate its 75th Anniversary. With its location on the southwest side of Chicago, St. Richard Parish has a warm and rich heritage which warrants recognition.

On the 8th of June 1928, His eminence George Cardinal Mundelein established St. Richard Parish. The Parish was named after St. Richard de Wyche, bishop of Chichester, England.

Reverend Horace Wellman was appointed the first pastor and in late June 1928, he celebrated his first mass. The first mass was given in a storefront on 51st Street that also served as a temporary home for the church. A census was taken over the following months to determine how many families would support a newly established church. Results from the census comprised of many different ethnic backgrounds for a total 110 families.

Property for St. Richard Parish was purchased at the intersections of Kostner Avenue, 50th Street, and Kenneth Avenue. Within a month the new church was ready and on September 2, 1928 the first mass was presented. The official blessing of St. Richard Church took place October 21st, with Rt. Rev. Msgr. D.J. Dunner D.D. officiating.

Father Wellman served his people well until he unfortunately and surprisingly passed away from a heart attack in 1931. The second pastor appointed to St. Richard Parish was Father Francis J. Quinn who officially took over on October 17, 1931. Under the direction of Father Quinn the Parish grew steadily in number, while also recovering from the Great Depression.

In April 1944, Father Quinn left St. Richard to assume the pastorate of St. Ambrose Church and was succeeded by Father Joseph Griffin. Father Griffin had to resign because of poor health, after serving as pastor for six months.

On November 10, 1944, Reverend Edward L. Kilroy was appointed pastor of St. Richard Church and helped continue the growth of the Parish. Under his direction and guidance, a new brick building combining both church and school was erected. It was Father Kilroy who asked the Dominican Sisters from Sinsinawa, Wisconsin to teach in the school, which opened in September of 1947. By the late 50's the enrollment in the school had passed 1,000 students. Father Kilroy recognized the need for expansion and so in 1959, a new church was erected on the southwest corner of West 50th Street and South Kostner.

In March 1966, Father Kilroy was given the honorary title of Pastor Emeritus and retired from his pastoral duties. Father William Fisher was assigned to succeed Father Kilroy as pastor of St. Richard Parish.

Father Fisher and the people of St. Richard combined their efforts and talents to organize what has become known as the "annual county fair," more commonly known as a carnival. Since 1972, the annual county fair has become a staple within the community.

Father Fisher retired from St. Richard Parish in 1981 as Pastor Emeritus and was succeeded by Reverend Jerome Siwek. Under Father Siwek the church was remodeled and lay minister programs were developed. Father Siwek became Pastor Emeritus on June 13, 1999.

Reverend Thomas Bernas followed Father Siwek and was installed as Pastor of St. Richard Church in June 1999. Upon his arrival he completed many projects that were planned as part of the "Into the 21st Century" campaign. Father Bernas sought to expand the vision of St. Richard Parish and has presided over the continued growth in its ministries and programs.

Organizations and groups continue to meet the many and diverse needs of the Parishioners. Because of St. Richard's excellent reputation, and because of the hard work of the faculty and staff, the school continues to see an increase in enrollment. Father Bernas also involved the Parish in a variety of community groups and organizations. St. Richard Parish is an active member of the Archer Heights Civic Association and the Chicago Police Caps Program.

This year marks the 75th Anniversary of St. Richard Parish. For 75 years God has generously blessed this Parish. Hopefully this will be a year of jubilee and celebration. St. Richard Parish has been and continues to be a proud community where people gather to worship God, socialize, work together, learn together, and celebrate as a family of faith.

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR FREE- DOM AND DEMOCRACY IN BURMA

HON. RANDY "DUKE" CUNNINGHAM

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 4, 2003

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to show my wholehearted support for those struggling for freedom and democracy in Burma and to condemn Burma's ruling military junta for their premeditated and cowardly attack on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi—whose whereabouts and condition are still unknown—and members of her National League for Democracy this past weekend.

Although they won an overwhelming victory over the military junta in Burma's 1990 election and are the legitimate, elected government of Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD's mandate to rule has been ignored by the junta for 13 years and one week as of today. While Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD are committed to working with the junta in order to reach a non-violent political solution to restore democracy in Burma, the junta has shown their utter contempt for such civilities and has resorted to violence as every scared, impotent dictatorship does when it feels threatened. In this case, the evil-doers did not stop at a brutal assault, they followed up their premeditated attack by putting the Nobel laureate and her top officials in so-called "protective custody," then proceeded to shut down their party offices around the country, tear down their party flags, cut party members' phone lines and place top members under house arrest. So afraid of the power and will of their people and especially the youth of their country, the junta went so far as to shut down all universities the day after the attack.